

9/9/2009

Dear Parent,

As we start a new school year, it is paramount that we heighten everyone's understanding of the potential for the outbreaks of the H1N1 flu, and what precautions should be taken. The Center for Disease Control has indicated that anyone can be susceptible to the flu. However, some individuals are at greater risk than others. So far, the largest number of cases have been between the ages of 5 and 24. CDC stated that those most at risk are children under age 5, pregnant women, and people of any age with chronic medical conditions (pulmonary disease, asthma, diabetes, neuromuscular disorders, or heart disease), and people who are 65 or older.

As you may know, flu can be easily spread from person to person. Therefore, we are taking steps to reduce the spread of flu in Stillwater Central Schools. We want to keep the school open to students and functioning in a normal manner during this flu season. **But, we need your help to do this.**

We are working closely with the Saratoga County Health Department and the New York State Education Department to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning schools. We will keep you updated with new information as it becomes available.

If the flu becomes more severe, we may take additional steps to prevent the spread such as:

- conducting active fever and flu symptom screening of students and staff as they arrive at school,
- making changes to increase the space between people such as moving desks farther apart and postponing class trips, and
- dismissing students from school for at least 7 days if they become sick.

For now we are doing everything we can to keep our school functioning as usual. Here are a few things you can do to help.

- **Teach your children to wash their hands** often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub. You can set a good example by doing this yourself.
- **Teach your children not to share personal items** like drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues. Covering up their coughs or sneezes using the elbow, arm or sleeve instead of the hand when a tissue is unavailable.
- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Symptoms of the flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit, 37.8 degrees Celsius or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.
- **Keep sick children at home** for at least 24 hours after they no longer have fever or do not have signs of fever, without using fever-reducing drugs. Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected.
- **Do not send children to school if they are sick.** Any children who are determined to be sick while at school will be sent home. Students in the nurse's office waiting for parents to pick them up will wear protective masks to reduce the risk of spreading illness, per CDC recommendations.

For more information visit www.flu.gov, or call 1-800-CDC-INFO for the most current information about the flu. We will notify you of any additional changes to our school's strategy to prevent the spread of flu.

Sincerely,

Dr. Stanley Maziejka
Superintendent of Schools